



Harbinger

www.graceevanston.org • churchoffice@graceevanston.org

December 2014

**Affirming,
Courageous,
Caring**

**Grace Lutheran
Church of Evanston
1430 South Blvd.
at Wesley
847.475.2211**

**Grace Is An Open
And Affirming RIC
Congregation**

OUR MISSION:

To courageously live out our faith by sharing grace with each other and the communities we serve.

OUR VISION:

All God's people will feel accepted, challenged, and cared for by Grace Church.

**10:45 Worship
Every Sunday**

**Rev. Daniel Ruen
Pastor**

pd@graceevanston.org

•
**Mark Bowman
Music Director**

•
**The Rev. Kaari
Reierson, The Rev. Jen
Rude, and The Rev.
Raquel Rodriguez,
Colleagues in Ministry**

•
**Marie O'Brien
Parish Administrator**

•
**Jackson DeLeon-Lopez
Sexton**

Make Me A Story

by Pastor Daniel



I'll never forget that moment in seminary when I picked my head up while reading the Bible and thought, "I know what this disorganized, inspired, messy, beloved and crazy book is about." It was an amazing hinge point in my life as a Christian. I felt like I had finally attached myself to the overall story of God.

The next thing I remember thinking was, "Thank God for the privilege of being able to attend seminary." How else could I have come to know the unfolding arc of the entire biblical narrative, from Genesis to the book of Revelation? I wasn't going to get it watching old Cecile B. DeMille movies.

I don't know how comfortable you are with the Bible. Do you use it regularly? Do you believe you have a sense for the ways the stories build on and inform one another? Do you go to scripture with equal parts curiosity, need, challenge and love? It's no secret that we mainline liberal Christians don't regularly make use of scripture—we have ceded it to our more con-

servative Christian sisters and brothers; we don't know how to approach its obvious complexities; or it seems like we should know more about it; we're afraid to appear uninformed.

Because of a growing awareness about these congrega-

tional realities, two of my former professors at Luther Seminary designed something called, 'The Narrative Lectionary.' It is meant to bring us all back to our roots, to the divine story—the reason we gather as a Christian community in the first place. Not so that we only know the story, though. I believe it is meant to make us into a story—living witnesses who embody a story of deep relationship, a story of profound sufferings and victories, a counter-intuitive story of justice and cosmic reconciliation.

During our Zignite retreat Pastor Jen Rude provided a convicting bit of data. She said that when one compares the amount of airtime mainstream media give to conservative and liberal Christian voices, the allotment is equal. This surprised the heck out of me.

GRACE ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING DECEMBER 7 AFTER WORSHIP



Advent and Christmas at Grace



Children's Pageant Sunday Dec. 1410:45am

Midweek Services *Midweek Services: Simple meal followed by service of contemplative prayer stations*
Wednesdays Dec. 3, 10, & 176:30pm

Blue Christmas: *A cooperative service of reflection and healing*
Monday, Dec. 227:00pm at Grace

Christmas Eve Wednesday, December 247:00pm Special Music,
7:30pm Worship

Christmas Day Thursday, Dec. 2510:00am Eucharist

Then Pastor Jen said, "The main difference is that when conservative Christians speak on the airwaves or online, they speak about their positions from the standpoint of their faith. Liberal Christians sound like they could be part of any nonprofit or humanitarian organization—they don't leverage their faith to explain why they're passionate about what they're doing."

Speaking positively and passionately about our faith is a growing edge for us and for our more liberal Christian culture. Unless we figure out our own faith language, growing more comfortable speaking it into the world, we will become increasingly irrelevant, and—I believe—increasingly frustrated and confused.

In this spirit, the Grace worship team unveils the Narrative Lectionary for a trial period, beginning in Advent. The Narrative Lectionary cycle began in September, so we've been jumping in as it moves from Genesis (September) through Exodus – Deuteronomy (October) and into the prophetic literature (November). We'll hear from books and Bible stories that don't always appear in the revised common lectionary. What's more, we'll begin to piece together the arc of the story as a community, drawing lines from one week to the next as we move throughout the year. Instead of three readings there will be only two: one that follows the arc of the story, and a corresponding Gospel lesson.

With the Narrative Lectionary comes the gift of our pew Bibles, lovingly donated and dedicated by you. Each will have the same page numbers so we can open to the Bible every week and get to know the order of the books, the way the verses are organized, and break through the barrier of becoming more comfortable using scripture. I also invite you to bring your own Bibles to church. I would be glad to suggest a few good study Bibles with maps and commentaries. While they won't have the same page number as the pew Bible, it would be good practice for everyone to be able to locate biblical stories and books without them. In any case, we will provide the readings in the bulletin the week before.

I hope this new initiative fosters greater Affirmation, Care and Courage in us as a body of Christ. I hope that we not only get to know our story, I pray that we are made into it.

Please contact me with any questions or ideas. Please see the following link for more specific info about the Narrative Lectionary on the site WorkingPreacher.com: <http://www.workingpreacher.org/?lectionary=nl>

PD

**Morning of Christ's
Nativity by W. Blake**



Reclaim Campaign Secures \$500,000.00 for Restorative Justice Programs in Cook County

The Cook County Board of Commissioners met on November 14th to approve amendments and finalize the budget. I am pleased to tell you that the board approved President Preckwinkle's amendment, which places \$500,000 in a brand new special fund for "community-based Restorative Justice services focused on reducing violence and restoring communities." I know that this is not the full \$1 million in increased funding we asked for, but the great news is that it is a separate fund specifically for RJ. This funding is due entirely to the hard work of CRS churches.



I hope you all take a few moments to enjoy the victory we earned in the county budget. Because of your work, there is now \$500,000 in new funding for community organizations to do Restorative Justice work. Funding that would not exist without you!

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Faith in Action Assembly will be Monday, January 19 from 9:30am-12pm at Liberty Baptist Church (4849 S. King Drive, Chicago). Mark your calendars!

THREADS OF GRACE HOLIDAY PROJECTS

Calling all knitters, crocheters and those adept with scissors!

As in past years, we are making scarves and hats for the homeless to be distributed through the Evanston Hospitality Center and Uptown Ministry. Many of our regular participants have been making items throughout the Summer and Fall, but it's not too late to join us. Especially those of you who wish to contribute fleece scarves, which essentially involves cutting fabric, are welcome to participate. It's a great family project and the people who receive them, many of whom are Veterans, particularly like the fleece. If you purchase a yard of fleece fabric, the 36" can be divided into (6) 6" scarves or (5) 7" scarves.



Several of our young people have been bitten by the needlecraft bug and are learning to knit. Anyone who is interested in learning to knit or crochet is always welcome to contact one of the Threads members: Nancy Starkman, Christine Collins and Gail Lamont for knitting instruction and Marjorie and Dominique Baptiste to learn to crochet. You can catch us at coffee hour after church, and we have a supply of yarn that we can use to help you get started.

Lastly, once again we will be collecting donations to purchase warm, waterproof gloves from Farm and Fleet. For a \$15 contribution, you can give the gift of warm hands.

Our deadline for turning in your scarves and hats is Sunday, December 7th. We will have a special blessing of all contributions that Sunday during worship and will be delivering items to the two organizations the following week. Thank you in advance to all of you who so generously give of your time, money and talent to this special ministry!





The Giving That Keeps on Gifting

In the coming days you will be inundated with gift suggestions for the holidays. You'll be tantalized with images of glamorous jewelry, stunning cars, nifty doodads, and stocking stuffers. Your mailbox will groan with requests to send money for dozens of different charities. Have you noticed they often suggest a gift of \$100.00—probably not in your budget.

In some ways the request for food for the Interfaith Hospitality Center is different from other requests for donations. First of all, for a very small amount—sometimes as little as \$2.00 or less -- you can purchase an item from the list below. This gift will gift people who don't have the luxury of even thinking about holiday gifts. Most of their energies will be focused on finding their next meal, a place to stay, or a job. You can help that process by giving a gift that will sustain their bodies.

The Interfaith Hospitality Center not only helps feed 35-50 people Monday through Friday, it also provides counseling services, computers to complete job applications, and a warm place to start the day. Please consider the purchase of one of the items below and bring it to Grace on the third Sunday of the month. Or if you see a bargain before that Sunday, bring the item to Grace and place it in the cupboard in the coat room.

Nancy VanBrundt, Connie Wood and Sarah Carson

Breakfast Needs:

Juice - 5 half gallons

Hot Chocolate mix - 2 cans (not the kind that needs milk added)

Coffee - 1 large container

Peanut butter - 1 large creamy, 1 large crunchy

Jam/Jelly - 2 large jars

Instant Oatmeal --5 boxes of individual packages

Syrup - 6 bottles

Sugar - 1 Five-pound bag

Creamer - 1 large container

Fruit



GRACE NEWS & EVENTS



Annual Budget Meeting
Sunday,
December 7, 2014,
in Fellowship Hall
following the
worship service.



Breaking Bread Together

Picture this if you will: Grace folks gathering over a meal. Some cook. Some buy prepared food. All eat.

That was the first Breaking Bread Together (you might remember it as Supper Club from some years back) for this season. The food theme was Greek, but it's safe to say the wine and beer were from all over.

One of the reasons the name was changed from Supper Club was to emphasize that we welcome any and all folks. Our next event is coming up in January on a Saturday to be determined. The theme is food of your heritage, which could be anything from lutefisk to meatloaf.

Come. Join us. Have some fun.

Claudia Perry

December Birthdays

Pat Brunger (12/1)
Dominique Baptiste (12/1)
Phyllis Buck (12/7)
Kelly Brunger (12/8)
Nancy Stewart (12/8)
Christine Collins (12/10)
Mark Mathyer (12/10)
David Utech (12/10)
Mark Bowman (12/12)
Cecilia Galicia (12/14)
Sarah Carson (12/15)
Peter Graef (12/15)
Peter Spies (12/15)
Joseph Flint (12/16)
Craig Alan Gonder (12/17)
Nancy Starkman (12/17)
Andria Morse (12/18)
Gail Lamont (12/20)
Kim Brown 12/21)
Rev. Daniel Ruen (12/25)
Lilia Johnson (12/25)
Lynn Otte (12/26)
Tyler Brunger (12/26)
Rina Campbell (12/31)

2014 Contribution to
the Courage Fund from
Fresh Watch
(Nagelbachs' farm)
\$179.00



DECEMBER WORSHIP SCHEDULE

December 7 - 2nd Sunday in Advent

Presiding Pastor Daniel Ruen
Preaching Pastor Daniel Ruen
Assisting Minister Taína Rodríguez Encarnación
Music Director Mark Bowman
Lector Nancy Mathyer
Cantor Nate Johnson
Acolyte Cecilia Galicia
Ushers Nate Brown, Karla Daye, Jon Flaherty
Coffee Hour TBD
Altar Care Nancy Mathyer, Ann Stevens
Godly Play Christmas Pageant
First Followers Christmas Pageant
Nursery Care Deb Mitchell
Flowers None During Advent

December 14 - 3rd Sunday in Advent

Presiding Pastor Daniel Ruen
Preaching Pastor Daniel Ruen
Assisting Minister Connie Wood
Music Director Mark Bowman
Lector Mark Mathyer
Cantor Stephanie Kulke
Acolyte Ava Daye
Ushers Nate Brown, Karla Daye, Jon Flaherty
Coffee Hour TBD
Altar Care Christian Lantry, Caitlin Sellnow
Godly Play Christmas Pageant
First Followers Christmas Pageant
Nursery Care Ann Stevens
Flowers None During Advent

December 21 - 4th Sunday in Advent

Presiding Pastor Daniel Ruen
Preaching Pastor Daniel Ruen
Assisting Minister Rosario Thacker
Music Director Mark Bowman
Lector Les Inch
Cantor Kelly Hackett
Acolyte William Thacker
Ushers Sarah Carson, Les Inch, Nancy Schubert
Coffee Hour TBD
Altar Care Christian Lantry, Caitlin Sellnow
Godly Play No Program
First Followers No Program
Nursery Care Nina Alvarez
Flowers None During Advent

December 24 Christmas Eve

Preaching Pastor Daniel
Assisting Minister Claudia Perry
Music Director Mark Bowman
Lector Susan Graef
Cantor TBD
Acolyte Zora Tallon Ruen
Ushers Sarah Carson, Les Inch, Nancy Schubert
Alter Care Deb Mitchell, Janet Wright
Nursery Care Nancy Schubert
Flowers Poinsettias

December 25 Christmas Day

Preaching Pastor Daniel
Assisting Minister Taína Rodríguez Encarnación
Music Director Mark Bowman
Lector Colby Sellers
Cantor TBD
Acolyte Logan Spies
Ushers Jan Blackburn, Bob Shoaf, Cecilia Galicia
Coffee Hour TBD
Alter Care Deb Mitchell, Janet Wright
Nursery Care Deb Mitchell
Flowers Poinsettias

December 28

Presiding Pastor Daniel Ruen
Preaching Pastor Daniel Ruen
Assisting Minister Connie Wood
Music Director Mark Bowman
Lector Christine Collins
Cantor TBD
Acolyte Joanie Daye
Ushers Jan Blackburn, Bob Shoaf, Cecilia Galicia
Coffee Hour TBD
Altar Care Ginny Ayers, Jeanine Brownell
Godly Play No Program
First Followers No Program
Nursery Care Ann Stevens
Flowers Poinsettias





Worship Notes for December: The Gifts of Advent

This year's Advent Theme is: The Gifts of Advent. The seasonal Advent planning team of Jan Blackburn, Taina Encarnacion-Rodriguez, Rina Campbell, Caitlin Sellnow, Mark Bowman and myself began by considering both the joy and challenge of receiving gifts. We have centered on the idea of celebrating gifts both known and unknown at Grace this season. Look for a reversal of the traditional Christmas gift tree during Sunday worship, and prepare to have our traditional Advent decorations renewed. There will be an interactive portion to both Sunday sermons and our Wednesday night midweek services. We will host three midweek services of a simple meal followed by a contemplative service of prayer stations, a reflection, and music in the Fellowship Hall. In addition, we will begin using our new pew Bible and dedicate those gifts on the first Sunday of Advent. As we prepare to simultaneously receive the gift of the helpless baby Jesus alongside the gift of God's end-times restoration and judgment I can think of no better time to frame the season of Advent around gifts that always come with a surprise. I look forward to meeting you at the welcome table soon!



Generations Class: A New Initiative

For six Sundays during the fall the Fellowship Hall was filled with over 30 people every week—Grace parents and their confirmation-age children—all exploring their faith and building relationships. Instead of 'Confirmation,' this initiative is entitled, 'Generations': it assumes that without parental involvement, any child's faith education is missing a vital component. Education liaisons Jarrod Gaither and Martha Fry worked with me over the summer to conceive of an entirely new way to engage our middle-school students. We questioned our preconceived notions of confirmation and began asking

ourselves the big questions: What is the goal of confirmation? Why do we do it the way we do it? What is it about the way we're doing confirmation that leaves so many of our youth uninspired and disconnected from the church when they reach high-school and/or leave home? While we wouldn't say we have the definitive answer to any of those big challenges, we did enough research to convince us we needed to involve our kids' primary educators: their parents.

We were nervous, but we put forth our proposal on a Sunday in late September to our 14 students and their parents, explaining our rationale for requiring parental attendance at each session. We decided to host three six-week sessions throughout the year, covering Jesus, the Bible, Christian history / theology and interfaith education. The second year will cover Martin Luther and the Reformation, as well as the Trinity and discipleship. Each student will select an inspiring initiative that relates to Affirmation, Courage or Care (or a combination of our core values), design a creative campaign around it, engage in a theological and scriptural exploration with my help and the help of other adult mentors and their parents, and present their project for recognition and consideration. If the student so chooses to affirm their baptism at the end of the two years, Grace will host this on a Sunday in late May. Parents will also have the opportunity to affirm their baptism.

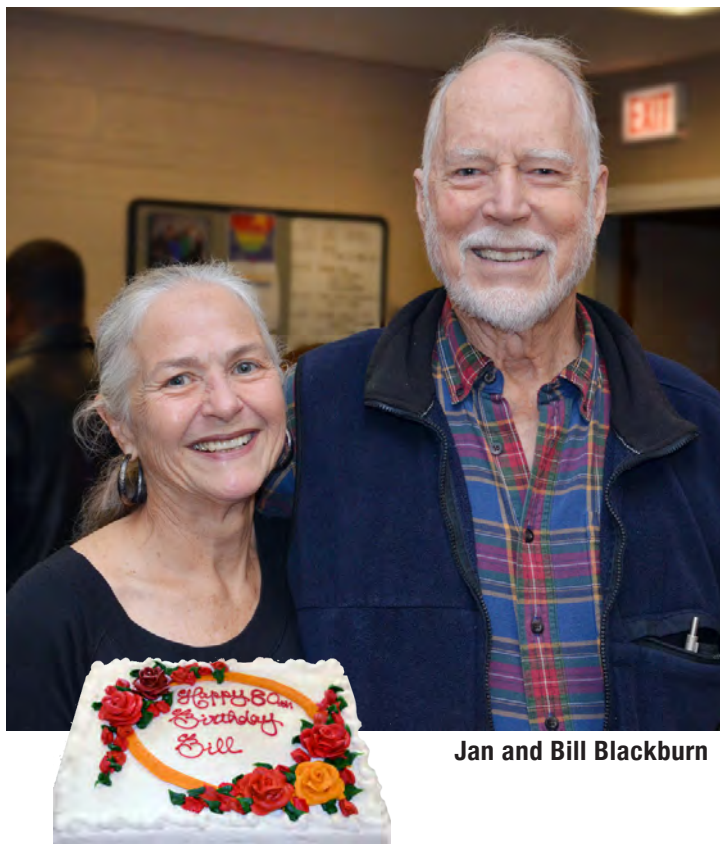
Each week of the six week session we met for refreshments at 9:30am, followed by assigning student roles for worship. We then had an introduction to the day's lesson. Afterwards, we watched a short video produced by Sparkhouse Publishing. These videos provided provocative questions for the students and their parents to discuss with one another, so we then spent 7-10 minutes in parent/student groups. At around 10am the groups split into separate adult and student groups, with Clare Tallon Ruen and Sarah Carson taking the youth to the lounge and Pastor Daniel hosting the discussion with the adults in the Fellowship Hall. At 10:25am the group would come back together for a brief report-back, upcoming events announcements and prayer. All adults were welcome at these sessions, and almost every week other adult Grace members would join us and enter into the discussion (adding yet another 'generation' to the Generations mix).

I was astounded at the intergenerational discussions, as well as the separate group activities and conversation that we engendered. Martha, Jarrod and I were amazed at the overall response: it was rare that any family missed a Sunday and, when they did, they often sent another family member to sponsor their child. I was humbled to engage with the adults about the big issues of their lives and how they relate to Christianity and the message of Jesus; we created a safe yet exciting space to share our thoughts and ideas with respect, humor and appreciation.

We now take a break for the holidays, gathering for the next session in January of 2015. In the meantime, we hosted a shared lock-in with the youth of St. Paul's Lutheran Church and we are making plans for our first week of Summer camp in late June or early July. Please pray for this exciting new initiative at Grace, and look for more updates as we continue!

- PD

On November 9 at coffee hour, the Grace family helped celebrate Bill Blackburn's 80th birthday!



Jan and Bill Blackburn

2Ignite Retreat



Celebrating 500 RIC Congregations!

Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in San Francisco is the 500th congregation to become a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation, an exciting milestone for intentional inclusion in the Lutheran Church. Recently, the congregational council unanimously approved their welcome statement and are happy to be included on the RIC website for people seeking a supportive church.

When the statement was read during worship, everyone clapped, and a party is scheduled for later in the year to celebrate the RIC status. The Rev. Megan Rohrer, the first openly transgender head pastor of a Lutheran church, said, "We hope visitors and members will learn more about our congregation and about God's full welcome to all. Regardless of how people identify, we hope they'll feel welcome and join us."

Members recently displayed a large rainbow made up of handprints of the babies in the infant care center, announcing the good news that Grace is the 500th congregation in the RIC movement.

The Rev. Dr. Patrick H. Shebeck, pastor of St. Paul-Reformation Lutheran (St. Paul, Minnesota)—the first RIC congregation—welcomed Grace, saying "Our work today is as important as it was when the program started in 1984. St. Paul-Reformation is delighted to welcome Grace Evangelical Lutheran in San Francisco, California, as the 500th RIC congregation. We are so glad you are here! Together, we are excited to move with Grace and all RIC congregations, synods, and institutions into the next phase of our call to live fully into the promises made to all in baptism."

ReconcilingWorks

1669 Arcade St. Ste. 2 St. Paul MN 55106-1054

Phone 651-665-0861 Fax 651-665-0863

info@ReconcilingWorks.org



TODAY'S STORY...

Reflections on Transgender Day of Remembrance The Ministry of Justice, Activism, and Weeping

Guest blog by Asher O'Callaghan

It's been about 4 years since I came out as transgender. I'll always remember the first vigil I participated in as a part of the International Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR). This day has been observed annually on November 20th since 1998 to honor the memory of those whose lives have been lost in acts of anti-trans* violence during the past year.



I had only been out for less than a month when I attended my first vigil and the experience was jarring. The event was held at a church building in a warm room with lots of candles and we sat in chairs forming concentric circles. As is typical at these vigils, each of the names of people who had been murdered was read. Even though I went into it aware of the heavy nature of the event, I was disturbed.

That year I was unsettled by several things I noticed about the names and people we were commemorating. Most of the people who had been lost that year were transwomen of color. We couldn't pronounce many of the names. I will forever remember a comment my girlfriend made as we were driving home: "They butchered so many of the names." It was true. Most of the people we were commemorating that year were from Central or South America. Yet most of the people gathered for the vigil (including me) were monolingual English speakers. I'm still glad the vigil was held, but the facilitators' inability to correctly pronounce the names (and my own inability to do any better) spoke powerfully to me about how far my own experiences and privileges were from those of other trans* people around the world.

Transgender Day of Remembrance is important because we still live in a world where hate crimes happen based on gender identity and gender expression. The most basic of all human rights is the right to live. While coming out certainly did feel scary for me, this vigil and the others I've participated in since have been reality checks. Though I may worry about my right to marry, or the prejudices I may occasionally encounter, I feel pretty safe in public on a daily basis.

Some progress has been made towards trans* equality. Much has yet to be made. Surely God grieves over this world in which some of God's children are not safe to live their lives as themselves. We are all called "to do justice, and to love kind-

ness, and to walk humbly with our God" (Mic 6:8). For me, part of this call to ministry has meant bringing my whole self and all my experiences into the ministry I do: my gender identity, my sexuality, my cultural background, my privileges. At times this call to ministry has been a call to activism. At other times, it's been a call to listen to the experiences of others. Sometimes a call to ministry means remembering to "weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15).

If you're interested in participating in a local vigil, you can find one nearby here: <http://tdor.info>.

What does the asterisk stand for in trans*? The asterisk is meant to symbolize that the term is being used as an umbrella to include a broad diversity of gender identities. So this term is meant to include not only people who identify as transgender or transsexual, but also people who identify as genderqueer, non-binary, gender fluid, third gender (just as a few examples).

Asher is a faithfully fabulous bisexual transguy. He's a Proclaim member, a candidate for first-call, and is serving on ELM's Board of Directors. In December, he'll be graduating from Luther Seminary. Asher is excited to have been assigned to the Sierra Pacific Synod. He's from the gloriously gorgeous land of Colorado and looks forward to spending lots of time doing outdoorsy things in another lovely part of the country.

Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries | 773-235-0610 | director@elm.org | <http://www.elm.org>

2649 N. Francisco Ave. • Chicago, IL 60647



Giotto "The Nativity"



December Calendar

Every Sunday 10:45 Worship followed by coffee hour

Sunday School during worship

Dec. 7 Grace Budget Meeting, after worship
Scarves and hats for Uptown brought to Grace



Grace Church Council

Les Inch, *Council President*

Taína Rodriguez Encarnación, Martha Fry, Jarrod Gaither,
Nate Johnson, Dorothy Nagelbach, Holly O'Connor, Laura Wally



Find us at:

GraceEvanston.org • facebook.com/graceevanston

Grace

Grace Lutheran Church of Evanston

1430 South Blvd.

Evanston, IL 60202

Voice: 847.475.2211

Fax: 847.869.9442